



Data helps improve quality of health care and influence policy in Palestine

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Within the coming decade, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that there will be a global shortage of 12.9 million health workers. In an effort to address this challenge, the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030 was developed, focusing on strengthening countries' data on human resources for health (HRH), updating and enforcing laws and regulations on the health workforce, enhancing HRH systems, developing country-specific strategies, and regularly monitoring and evaluating HRH policies.

Within this strategic framework, countries are shifting their focus towards human resources in health to enhance the quality of health service delivery, attain universal health coverage, and achieve equitable access to care, in accordance with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹ These initiatives require valid and viable data on the availability and distribution of the local health workforce, which many countries lack due to fragmented health data and reporting systems.

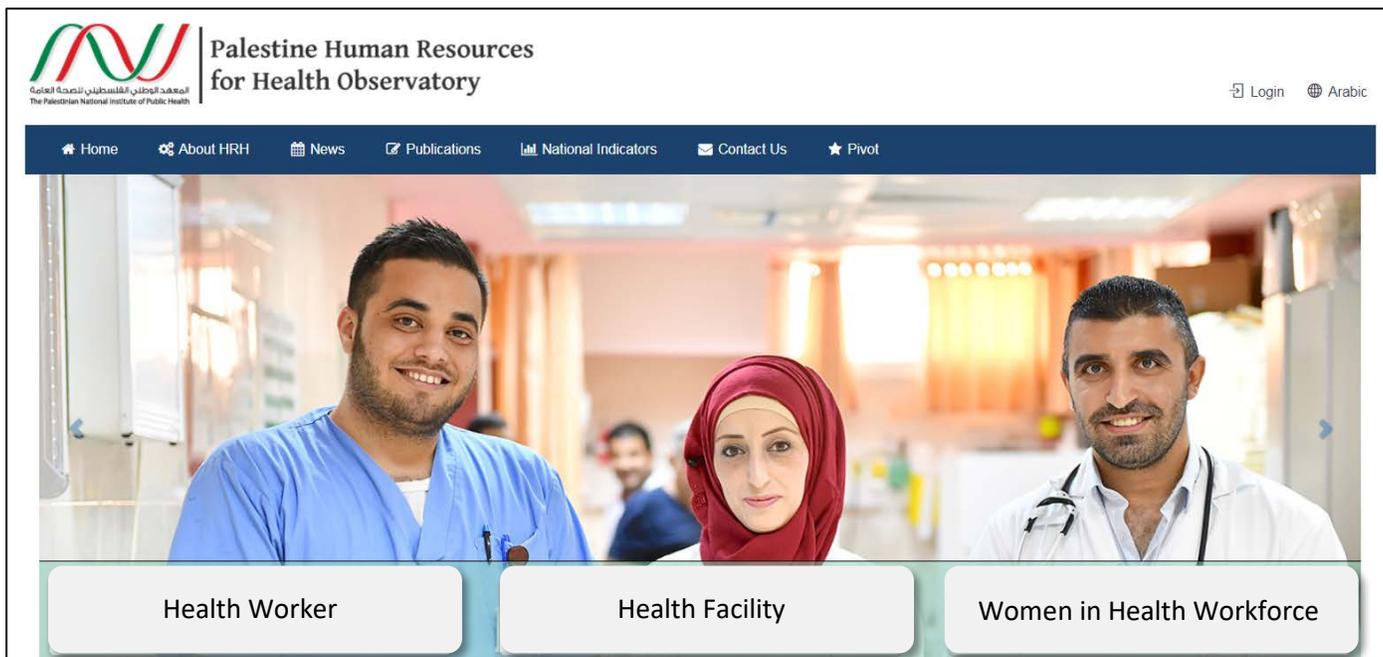
As a major initial step towards enhancing the health workforce in Palestine, the Palestinian

National Institute of Public Health (PNIPH), in collaboration with the WHO, Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH), and Norwegian partner organizations, developed the Palestinian National Human Resources for Health Observatory (HRHO).

The HRHO is a web-based application that functions as a data hub, facilitating the collection and analysis of information on practicing health workers in all sectors. This data will help guide research on health workforce issues, develop national indicators, monitor progress over time, and advocate for evidence-based policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Previously, data was not centrally located, and often included duplicate numbers, inaccurate figures, and information on registered rather than practicing health workers, presenting an inaccurate picture of the workforce. For example, according to health syndicates, the number of registered health workers (physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, and midwives) in the West Bank and Gaza in 2017 was 28,915. According to the information PNIPH collected however, the actual number of practicing professionals in

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>



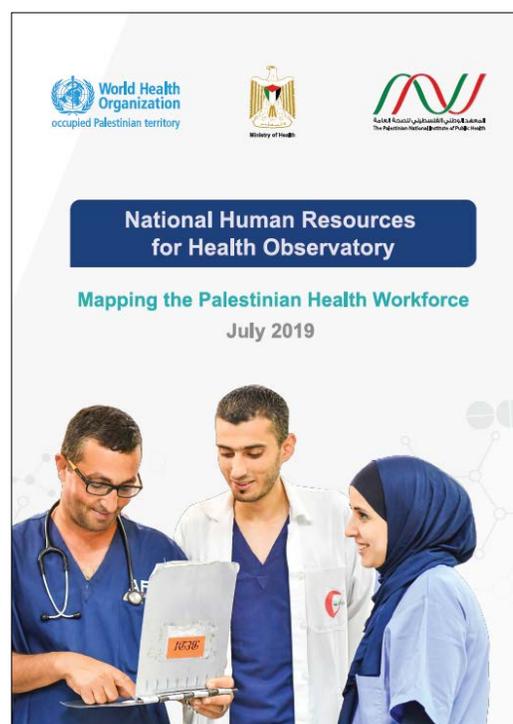
Homepage of the Palestinian National HRH Observatory website.

2017 was 18,682—roughly 65% of the number of registered health professionals.

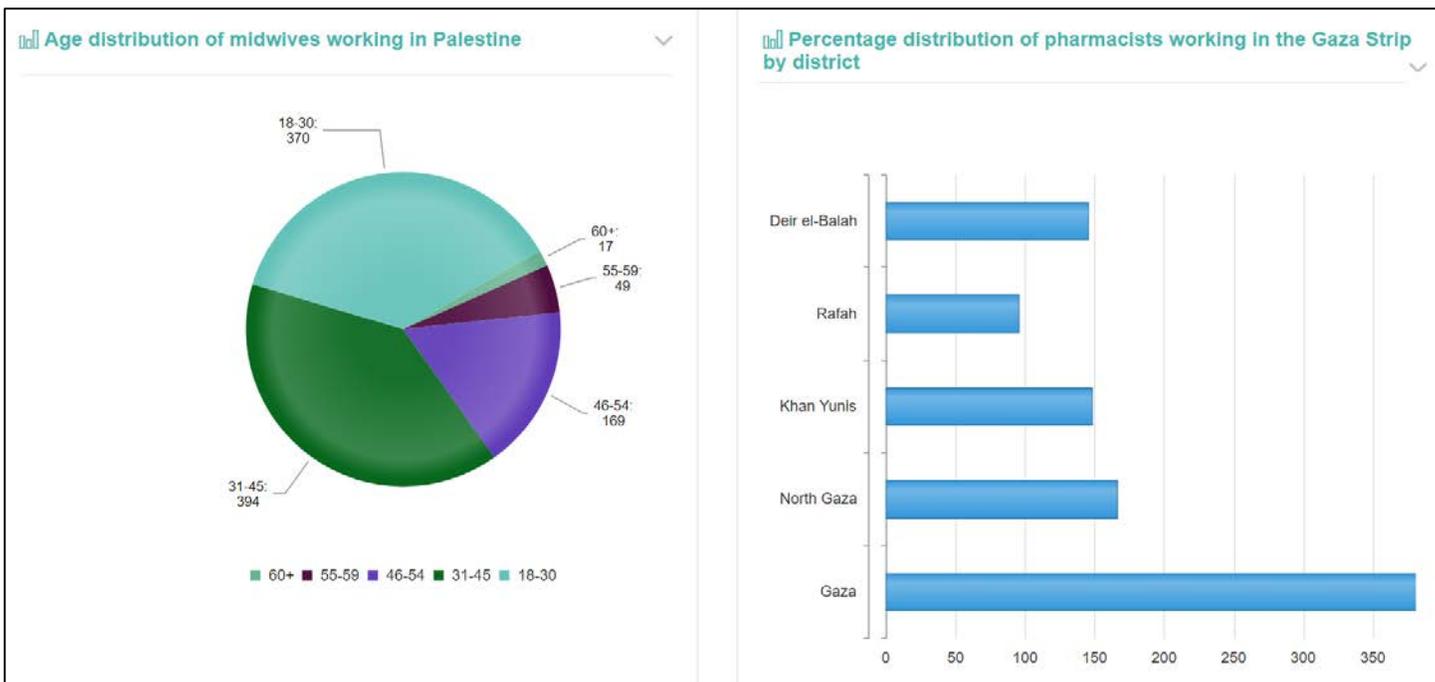
To develop the HRHO, a nation-wide survey was conducted between 2014 and 2016 to collect data on practicing health workers, primarily those managed by the MoH, UNRWA, NGOs, Military Health Services, and the private sector. Over 36,000 health workers participated in the survey, including doctors, nurses, midwives, dentists, pharmacists, allied health professionals, administrative and support staff, and alternative medicine professionals found working in the facilities visited. Health professionals' unique ID numbers were utilized to code data in order to ensure quality and accuracy, and avoid duplications.

PNIPH aimed to institutionalize this effort by involving stakeholders throughout the Observatory development process, generating a sense of ownership and accountability, and providing a reliable mechanism for regular data sharing and updates. Additionally, PNIPH worked with the MoH Licensing Department to digitize their records, enhancing the department's capacity, and allowing staff to have access to

accurate, real-time data on registered health facilities and licensed health professionals. The Licensing Department will now be able to link its system with the HRHO, ensuring the regular transfer of private sector data on the practicing health workforce.



Report on the health workforce based on data from the HRH Observatory.



Dashboard generated using the HRHO.

The Observatory provides a more accurate representation of the practicing health workforce and is being used to study areas for improvement including:

- Health workforce availability (including geographic and demographic distribution) based on national and local needs as identified by health syndicates
- Health labor market dynamics (demand vs. supply of health workforce)
- Unemployment rates in the local health sector
- Workforce emigration rates to Israel and abroad
- Health professionals working in other professions and sectors

- Health workforce strategies for universal health coverage
- Multi-sectoral collaboration of stakeholders for human resources and public health development
- Medical specializations that should be promoted to generate needed health workers

As one of the first countries in the Middle East to establish an HRH observatory, Palestine is helping lead the regional focus on human resources for health. The knowledge gained through the HRHO will allow decision makers to highlight and maintain strengths within the health sector and take positive steps toward addressing challenges in an effort to achieve universal health coverage.

For more information, visit PNIPH at www.pniph.org